

REMARKS

Claims 6, 7, 11, 13 and 19 have been objected to by the Examiner for the reasons set forth in paragraph 2 of the Examiner's Office Action letter mailed January 19, 2007. This objection is respectfully traversed.

As the Examiner will note, claims 11, 13 and 19 have been amended as suggested by the Examiner and accordingly, it is believed that this objection has been eliminated.

Claims 2, 4-5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent 4,145,468 to Mizuguchi et al. (hereinafter Mizuguchi '468). Claims 6-9, 12, and 16-18 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizuguchi '468 as applied to claims 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 above and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,256,429 to Honda et al. (hereinafter Honda '429). Claims 6-9 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizuguchi '468 as applied to claims 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 above and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,780,469 to Iijima et al. (hereinafter Iijima '469).

Claims 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizuguchi '468 in view of any one of U.S. Patent 4,497,095 to Minemura et al. (hereinafter Minemura '095), U.S. Patent 4,146,663 to Ikeda et al. (hereinafter Ikeda '663), U.S. Patent 4,118,529 to Nakagawa et al. (hereinafter Nakagawa '529), or U.S. Patent 3,865,678 to Okamoto et al. (hereinafter Okamoto '678).

Claims 6-9, 12, and 16-18 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizuguchi '468 in view of any one Minemura '095, Ikeda '663, Nakagawa '529 or Okamoto '678 as applied to claims 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 above and further in view of Honda '429.

Claims 6-9 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizuguchi '468 in view of any one of Minemura '095, Ikeda '663, Nakagawa '529 or Okamoto '678 as applied to claims 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-19 above, and further in view of Iijima '469.

Finally, claims 2 and 4-19 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Honda '429 in view of any one of Minemura '095, Ikeda '663, Nakagawa '529 or Okamoto '678.

These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to a composite sheet which possesses excellent softness, low elongation and form stability, wherein the composite sheet contains a non-woven fabric layer (1) having ultra fine fibers with a fineness of less than 0.3 denier, a woven or knitted fabric layer (2) containing a yarn made of ultra fine fibers having a fineness of 0.01 to less than 0.3 denier and a polyurethane resin. As can be seen by referring to claim 13 of the present application, the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer (2) is further defined so as to be not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1). This feature of the present invention can be found by referring to the top of page 5 of the present application. Thus, it is important that the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric of the present invention is the same or less than the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric of the present invention. Thus, as noted on page 7, line 3 to page 8, line 7 of the present application, the importance of the feature of the present invention, wherein the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric is not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer is clearly pointed out. Thus, if the fineness of the woven or knitted fabric layer (2) is larger than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1), such larger fineness may cause damage of the woven or knitted fabric due to a needle punching operation for bonding the woven or knitted fabric to the staple non-woven fabric layer (1) and the damaged fibers often come out to the surface of the

artificial leather. Thus, since the fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer which come out to the surface have a larger fineness than that of the staple fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1), an uneven appearance of the artificial leather and a reduced softness is the result.

In reviewing the many rejections made by the Examiner, it should be noted that in all of except one of the rejections raised by the Examiner, Mizuguchi '468 is cited as the primary reference. In the remaining rejection as set forth by paragraph 11 of the Examiner's Office Action letter, Honda '429 has been cited as a primary reference. Thus, in responding to the Examiner's many rejections, an emphasis will be placed upon Mizuguchi '468 and Honda '429. If it can be shown to the Examiner that both of these prior art references contain deficiencies which cannot be cured by secondary references, it is then believed that all of the rejections raised by the Examiner in the Office Action letter must fail to suggest the Applicants' inventive contribution.

In reviewing the Examiner's rejections, it appears that the Examiner fails to appreciate the deficiencies in Mizuguchi '468 as previously argued in our responses to the U.S.P.T.O. Thus, it is believed that the Examiner's comments provided on page 17 of the Office Action letter under the heading "Response to Arguments" arrive at the wrong conclusions. It is the Applicants' position that the recitation in claim 13 that the woven or knitted fabric layer is made of ultra fine fibers having a fineness of 0.01 to 0.3 deniers is not, in fact, met by the language in Col. 8, lines 51-57 of Mizuguchi '468 wherein it is stated that the woven fabric has a denier of 3 or less and preferably 0.5 to 3. Certainly, a range of 0.5 to 3 cannot be logically expanded to overlap with the Applicants' range of 0.01 to 0.3 denier without making use of the Applicants' own disclosure.

In addition, Mizuguchi '468 has not met the limitation of claim 13 wherein the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer is not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer. The Examiner does in fact address this issue on page 18 of the Office Action letter but, in our opinion, again arrives at the wrong conclusion.

The Examiner concludes that Mizuguchi '468 appears to teach that the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer (2) "may be" not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1). Thus, Mizuguchi '468 does not, in fact, define the aspect of the present invention wherein a specific relationship has been established between the non-woven fabric layer (1) and the woven or knitted fabric layer (2), said relationship solving a specific problem. Thus, as pointed out in the present application, if the fineness of the woven or knitted fabric layer (2) is larger than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1), such larger fineness may cause damage of the woven or knitted fabric due to a needle punching operation for bonding the woven or knitted fabric to the staple non-woven fabric (1) with the damaged fibers often coming out to the surface of the artificial leather.

In the case of Honda '429, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is more than 2 denier (please refer to Example: 76 denier/36 filament) and the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric is less than 0.8 denier (please refer to Col. 3, lines 52-56 of Honda '429). As a result, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is always larger than the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric. Thus, neither Mizuguchi '468 nor Honda '429 recognizes the Applicants' inventive contribution.

Nakagawa '529 is directed to a suede woven fabric which does not even contain a non-woven fabric layer component which is a necessary ingredient in the composite sheet for artificial leather as defined by the present invention.

Ikeda '663 discloses a composite fabric combining entangled fabric or microfibers and knitted or woven fabric. Although the prior art reference may show a mixture of woven and non-woven fabric, there is no recognition in Ikeda '663 of the precise fineness of the ultra fine fibers as defined by claim 13 of the present application as well as the fact that the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer is not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer.

Minemura '095 is directed to an apparatus for preparing suede-like raised woven or knitted fabric. Here again, this prior art reference discloses the use of only woven or knitted fabric and thus there is no suggestion in the referenced patent of the use of a mixture of both woven and non-woven fabric. Similarly, Okamoto '678 is directed to a suede-like raised woven fabric and a process for its preparation. There appears to be no recognition of the desirability of using a mixture of a woven fabric and a non-woven fabric.

The relevancy of Iijima '469 is not understood inasmuch as the disclosure thereof is merely generic in nature and contains no relevance with respect to the relationship between the denier of the woven fabric and the denier of the non-woven fabric.

Thus, none of the references relied upon by the Examiner, either alone or in combination, recognize the Applicants' inventive contribution which is directed to a composite sheet which possesses excellent softness, low elongation and form stability wherein the component sheet contains a non-woven fabric layer (1) having ultra fine fibers with a fineness of less than 0.3 denier, a woven or knitted fabric layer (2) containing a yarn made of ultra fine fibers having a fineness of 0.01 to less than 0.3 denier and a polyurethane resin. Furthermore, none of the references relied upon by the Examiner suggest the feature of the present invention wherein the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer (2) is not more than the fineness of the ultra fine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer (1). Since none of the references relied upon by the Examiner either alone or in combination recognize the features of the present invention as discussed hereinabove, any possible combination of the prior art references relied upon by the Examiner cannot possibly suggest the present invention.

Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of all of the claims of the present application are respectfully requested.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Joseph A. Kolasch Reg. No. 22,463

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Amendment dated April 11, 2007
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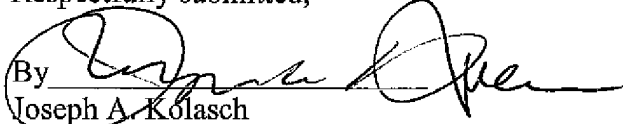
Docket No.: 3254-0121PUS1

at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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